

FRIENDS OF THE SCOTSMAN /

Now is the time for us all to rediscover our love for our sustainable silver darlings

Since the closure of the herring fishery in the late 1970s to enable recovery, the North Sea stock has bounced back big style, writes **Robert Duthie**



The Scottish North Sea herring season will shortly get underway with vessels from Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Shetland working traditional grounds in search of the 'silver darlings'.

The importance of the humble herring to Scottish society and its cultural and economic development is immense, with there being evidence of herring fisheries in Scotland from Medieval times onwards.

Herring was the foundation of many of our fishing communities around the coast and became part of the beating heart of the nation. The late 1800s and early part of the 20th century was a boom time for the herring industry, where boats crowded cheek by jowl in harbours such as Wick, Fraserburgh and Lerwick.

In many ways, herring helped fuel the industrial revolution, being a key food staple that helped provided sustenance for workers in factories and fields across the land.

Today, the picture is rather different, with the closure of the herring fishery in the late 1970s and early 1980s to enable stock recovery, resulting in UK consumers seeking other varieties of fish.

Since then, the North Sea stock has bounced back big style, and today it is the only herring fishery in the north-east Atlantic that is independently certified by the Marine Stewardship Council for the sustainable manner in which it is harvested. Such recognition is testament to the hard work of Scottish herring fishers in putting sustainability at the heart of their operations.

Such commitment is exhibited in many ways, including Scottish herring (and mackerel) fishers engaging in pioneering science initiatives to sample and assess stocks to provide data and information that aids sensible and pragmatic fisheries management.

For environmentally conscious consumers, this is great news, for it means they can eat North Sea herring in confidence, safe in the knowledge that the fishery is sustainably harvested.

It would be wonderful if UK consumers rediscovered their past love for herring because it really is a fish that ticks all the right boxes – sustainable, nutritious, delicious, and great value for money. Herring is full of essential vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that keep our bodies in good working order.

In the kitchen, there is surely no simpler, tastier, nor healthier dish than traditional herrings in oatmeal, and the fish also lends itself to a whole range of other recipe ideas. Smoked herring – kippers – are a great breakfast treat, and marinated herrings are gaining in popularity all the time.

In some countries, most notably the Netherlands, Germany, Poland and the Baltic states, Scottish herring is extremely popular, and forms an important part of the herring export business from Scotland. Indeed, sales of canned herring soared in all these countries during the Covid-19 pandemic, with consumers looking for value-for-money, nutritious food that can easily be stored. The Dutch reverse 'maatjes herring' – a premium, lightly brined product, consisting of the first, high-fat content summer-caught herring of the year. This fishery by Scottish vessels has been underway since the start of June.

So, with UK health experts recommending that people should eat two portions of fish per week, one of which should be an oily fish such as herring, now really is the time where we should start rediscovering our love for the silver darlings, and make sure it forms part of our weekly food shop.

Robert Duthie, chairman of the Scottish Pelagic Processors' Association



Charities now face tough decisions



it's more important than ever that we continue to support the third sector and help them help others, says **Melanie Hill**

The past 18 months have placed unprecedented financial strain on the third sector. Following the impact of the pandemic, many charitable organisations are now facing tough decisions about whether they can afford to continue providing invaluable services for the communities they support.

In a sector where every penny doesn't just count, but makes a real difference, the Scottish Power Foundation has awarded more than £9 million over the past eight years to worthy causes that have a positive impact on people's lives. And as society starts to reopen and we emerge from the pandemic, it's more important than ever that we continue to support the third sector in this way and help them help others.

That's why I'm proud the Foundation is sharing almost £1.2m of funding with charities across the UK this year. The money will be used to support incredible projects that will help improve and change lives for people and communities across the country.

Since it was established in 2013, the Scottish Power Foundation has been committed to supporting charities with vital funding and this year is no different. Despite the challenges and financial implications of the pandemic, it's crucial that funders who are still able to support charities, continue to do so.

From Beith to Bournemouth, we're funding 16 charities to help them deliver amazing projects that support the arts, education, citizenship and society as well as biodiversity and climate change.

Projects range from an initiative to provide opportunities for young people to learn more about their local heritage and gain vital employment qualifications in the process, to a musical education programme that transforms the way young people learn to play music.

We're also proud to support a project that encourages school pupils to learn about climate change and develop their debating skills to educate their peers on the matter, as well as a new project that helps families deal with the long-term effects of Covid-19 on mental health and wellbeing.

All the charities we're supporting this year make a huge positive impact on people's lives and it's testament to the resilience and strength of these charities that they've been able to plan for and start to deliver such inspiring projects.

It's not something we should take for granted, particularly in the current climate, and we were once again overwhelmed by the extraordinary work being carried out in communities by this year's applicants.

We would love to help every applicant we get, so it's hard to choose the ones that will have the greatest impact. The calibre of applications this year is testament to the hard work of charity workers across the UK, but also highlights the funding gap facing the third sector in the wake of the pandemic.

As well as continuing our charitable support in 2021, this year marks an exciting new chapter for the Scottish Power Foundation. In the year



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

of the COP26 climate change summit in Glasgow, we've created a new Marine Biodiversity Fund to finance a multi-year project, up to £600,000 over three years, that contributes to the global objectives of protecting our seas and enhancing marine biodiversity.

Applications have now closed and details of the successful project will be announced later this year, but there's no doubt what it delivers will

leave a positive legacy for future generations. And that's what the Scottish Power Foundation is all about, making a difference for others and supporting life-changing projects the length and breadth of the country, and we applaud all our charitable partners for the incredible work they do, day in and day out.

Melanie Hill is Executive Officer and Trustee at the Scottish Power Foundation

↑ **Scottish Power Foundation has created a Marine Biodiversity Fund with a global objectives of protecting our seas and enhancing marine biodiversity.**



Conservation trust proud to play its part for the environment

The loss of events over the last 15 months due to Covid has been inevitable. Youngsters missed school for months, interactions with friends, and many sports and hobbies were put on hold. Let's hope that's behind us as we return to normality.

The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust in Scotland has a small budget for education. Doing our bit to connect youngsters with the countryside is important alongside other organisations like the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET), the Royal Northern Countryside Initiative (RNCI) and LEAF Open Farm Sunday.

As we move towards more environment focused farming support, not just food, that brings more challenges in the messages we need to

put across to the next generation.

Planting crops for wildlife and insects, beetle banks, field margins, hedges, farm woodlands, ponds and wet areas will be more significant. Farmers won't just be looking over the dyke at what their neighbour is doing but will, we hope, work together in clusters to deliver better, broader results. Not just conserving the birdlife and wildlife that we have but enhancing it. Songbirds, small mammals, bees, insects, invertebrates and game species all matter, as does the habitat that allows them to thrive.

Through our education programme we have organised school outings to our Partridge demonstration site in the Lothians. Past projects have included schools planting hedges and creating new habitats, and

visits have been organised as prizes for our art competitions with farm owners and staff telling the children about why they manage the land for wildlife and birds.

Our annual schools' art competitions stimulate youngsters' creativity. Running in Perthshire, Angus and Aberdeenshire and dating back 15 years we've worked with many sponsors and education authorities across primary and secondary levels asking youngsters to depict different species of game and wildlife. Whilst Covid did its best to derail our competitions in 2020 a well-supported event still ran in Aberdeenshire and we hope to launch the programme once again in all local authority areas that have supported us so far.

And at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair, running this year from Septem-

ber 24-26 at Scone Palace, our educational presence will be strong as ever in our central area with storytelling, hands-on science, arts and crafts, and bugs and beasts for all young, budding ecologists.

Education doesn't stop with youngsters. Covid has drawn more visitors into the countryside and there are many messages that are important – about livestock, litter, ground nesting birds, dogs, the access code, and more generally that we need an environ-

ment that lets our wildlife prosper and where those who manage the land can go about their business. We all have a responsibility to play our part and GWCT is proud to play its part too.

For farms able to host visits or schools interested in finding out more about our art competitions or farm visits please get in touch ilaing@gwct.org.uk

Iona Laing, Education and Events Officer, GWCT Scotland



Forestry delivering real jobs and growth to rural Scotland

Sustainably planting trees, managing forests and creating timber products have a crucial role to play in tackling the climate crisis, says **Stuart Goodall**



Confidence is key to so many things, including Scotland's expanding forestry and wood processing sector. And when there's change, a degree of uncertainty can be introduced.

The productive partnership between industry and Scottish Government over the last five years has been crucial to securing the current high level of business confidence, which has led to record investment, new jobs and rural economic growth.

With a new Government, new ministers and new portfolios, the sector is keen to understand whether that will be accompanied by any change in policy, or any change to the positive relationship central to this modern-day Scottish success story.

Scotland is currently planting 80 per cent of the UK's trees in modern, mixed-species forests which deliver multiple benefits and tackle the two great challenges of 2021 - recovery from Covid-19 and the climate crisis.

Our industry rose to the Covid-19 challenge to provide the wooden products needed to move medical supplies and food. Now, as Scottish Government looks to a green recovery from the pandemic, it is ready to play an even bigger part in a successful environmental and economic future.

With Scotland targeting a net zero balance of carbon emissions and reduction by 2045 (five years before the rest of the UK), planting trees, managing forests and creating timber products have a crucial role in tackling the climate crisis. Don't take my word for it; the Climate Change Committee, independent advisers to the UK and Scottish Governments, have said so repeatedly.

When setting out priorities for the new government, the First Minister led with a Covid recovery driven by ambitious plans for a modern, high-

tech economy. Anyone who has seen a £500,000 harvesting machine in action, preparing logs to be sent to sawmills which utilise the latest technology to ensure every bit of that log is used, knows this is a hi-tech industry. It is also increasingly crucial in providing well-paid jobs in rural areas. That success has not gone unnoticed. England has looked enviously at Scotland's success in planting trees and producing low-carbon wood products and the recent publication of the England Trees Action Plan signals a desire by the UK Government to raise its game. The Welsh Government recognises the carbon and sustainability benefits of using wood in new homes and wants more of that to be Welsh. Unlocking the potential will require new investment.

Scotland has attracted record investment, including £95m by Norbord at its Inverness panel board site, one of the largest inward investments in any industry in recent years. Scottish sawmills are investing tens of millions of pounds, reassured there will be future supplies of wood.

With a new Scottish Government, we are looking for continuity, to keep confidence high and maintain the momentum that has helped create an industry delivering more than £1 billion in annual economic value and supporting 25,000-plus jobs. Forestry and wood processing is delivering real jobs and growth to all areas of rural Scotland and at the same time, playing a central role in delivering Scotland's net zero ambitions.

With continued support around the Cabinet table, the confidence and momentum will remain, and the economic and environmental benefits for Scotland will continue to flow.

Stuart Goodall is Chief Executive of forestry and wood trade body Confor



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